The Mine Health and Safety Council’s current occupational health research programme comprises a number of ongoing research projects, which have continued from 2003 and were featured in a previous MMOA editorial. Six new projects and one Phase 2 project have commenced in 2004. Most projects involve multiple agency collaboration, offer opportunities for postgraduate research and will continue in the 2005/2006 Safety in Mines Research Advisory Committee (SIMRAC) programme. The collaborative research project on tuberculosis chemoprophylaxis with the Bill and Melanie Gates Foundation and the multiyear silicosis control programme will commence during this year.

SIMRAC Occupational Health Research in 2004

Mary H. Ross, Mine Health and Safety Council Occupational Health Programme Manager, Associate Professor, School of Public Health, University of the Witwatersrand

and Paul K. van der Heever, Mine Health and Safety Council Research Manager

SIM 04-07-01

REVIEW OF ILLUMINATION SYSTEMS AND OCCUPATIONAL MEDICAL SURVEILLANCE IN MINES AND A HANDBOOK/CD OF BEST PRACTICE

Scope of Project

The current and best practice regarding lighting systems and illumination will be assessed and recorded for different tasks using the PIMEX system. Medical surveillance systems for vision will be investigated for fulltime and contract workers and will be linked to the illumination findings to produce a handbook and CD of best practice for illumination, medical surveillance and working safely in different workplaces in the mining industry. Technology transfer workshops will be conducted in 2005.

Interested persons should contact the project leader.

Project leader: Mr Frank von Glehn,
Bluhm Burton Engineering (Pty) Ltd, PO Box 786012,
Sandton 2148
E-mail: fvonglehn@bbe.co.za

SIM 03-08-03

BIOMARKERS FOR THE EARLY DETECTION OF SILICOSIS PHASE 2

Scope of project

Evidence-based recommendations by a multinational research team were made in Phase 1 to explore potential biomarkers for feasibility of use in the early detection of effects of silica exposure. In Phase 2, these markers will be evaluated, prioritised and piloted for further investigation in a Phase 3 cohort study.

Interested persons should contact the project leader.

Project leader: Dr Jill Murray

SIM 03-06-03

SILICOSIS CONTROL PROGRAMME

Scope of Project

The occupational hygiene and engineering research needs to reduce silica exposure have been determined and discussed with stakeholders at regional and national workshops. The research will be overseen by a tripartite committee and will comprise three tracks: dust measurement and reporting; environmental engineering and dust control; and development and evaluation of materials for human resources training.

Interested individuals should contact the SIMRAC administrator, Cecile Gomes, to receive the scopes and details of the project for track co-ordination and participation within the three tracks.

Phase 2 Project leaders: to be selected as advertised in the Government Gazette Mine Health and Safety Council, Private Bag X63, Braamfontein 2017
E-mail: cgomes@simpross.co.za
SIM 03-08-06
Respiratory disease in the South African platinum mining industry
Scope of project
A review will be conducted on occupational respiratory disease in the platinum mining industry, commencing with analysis of cases submitted for autopsy and compensation.

Retrospective analysis of cases for exposure and disease will include tabulation of historical exposure levels for dust and silica across the platinum industry, establishing allocation of risk by workplace and further research, if required (Phase 2).

Interested persons should contact the project leader.
Project leader: Professor Brendan Girdler Brown
HSCT, PO Box 59, Bergbron 1712
E-mail: brendan.gb@icon.co.za

SIM 04-09-02
Survey of multiple occupational health hazards in the SA mining industry – Phase 1
Scope of the project
The first phase comprises a pilot study on 4 mines to identify and quantify chemical and physical occupational hazards and worker exposure to these hazards. International collaboration will ensure the use of leading risk assessment strategies. In Phase 2, the results will be used to develop an integrated risk assessment model for occupational health and to establish a database to estimate the number of mineworkers exposed to multiple hazards.

Interested persons should contact the project leader.
Project leader: Dr Marlene Fourie
Infotox, PO Box 98092, Waterkloof Ridge 0065
E-mail: marlene@infotox.co.za

SIM 04-09-03
Handbook – Measurements in Mine Occupational Hygiene
Scope of the project
This will be a multi-author handbook with chapters covering measurement of chemical, physical and biological hazards in the mining industry. Each chapter will include guidelines for conducting the relevant occupational hygiene measurements with emphasis on the appropriate instrumentation, calibration, sampling and operational procedures. It is intended to launch the handbook in September 2005.

Interested persons should contact the project leader.
Project leader: Mr Christo Oberholzer
MVS, PO Box 93480, Yeoville 2143
E-mail: co-napas@iafrica.com

More information on current and completed projects can be accessed at the website www.simrac.co.za and persons or research teams interested in the occupational health and safety research programmes can contact Paul van der Heever at the Mine Health and Safety Council.
E-mail: pvdheever@simpross.co.za